

B8595HC
2.E56-3
Copy 1

Certified Public Manager Project

Dillon County DSS Employee Orientation Program

By

Susan R. Carter

*Dillon County DSS
PO Box 1307
Dillon, SC 29536*

*Telephone: 843-774-8284
Fax: 843-841-0253
E-mail: scarter@dss.state.sc.us*

February 29, 2000

Ann P. Griffin

**Ann P. Griffin
Dillon County DSS County Director**

S. C. STATE LIBRARY

AUG 3 2004

STATE DOCUMENTS

Problem Statement, Project Goal, and Cause Analysis

The Dillon County Department of Social Services employs fifty-five full-time Equivalency (FTE) employees. Eleven FTE's or twenty percent of the Dillon County DSS staff have resigned, transferred, or been terminated within the last eighteen months. This has meant that at any given time, a number of employees are in their first year probationary period. Also, many of the jobs at Dillon County DSS are entry level positions requiring only a bachelor's degree or less. As a result of this, employment with us is the first professional job for many of our staff members. These two factors mean that many of the staff here are relatively young and inexperienced with little knowledge of county and agency policies and procedures.

Another concern is that since this office has no formal, intensive orientation training, even more seasoned staff members may not be knowledgeable of all procedures. During staff meetings, supervisors, caseworkers and support staff have expressed concerns about the fact that staff fail to follow policies and procedures concerning things such as the use of state vehicles; filing for meals, mileage, and hotel reimbursement; and requesting and using annual and sick leave. Employees' failure to follow procedures results in time spent by supervisors and/or support staff correcting problems that could have been avoided.

Employees and supervisors have also expressed concerns regarding their lack of understanding of their benefits as state employees. They do not feel that they have sufficient information to make the best decisions for themselves and their families regarding insurance plans, deferred compensation, and retirement options. This lack of information among staff regarding benefits has also been verified by the Personnel Director.

Lastly, the agency Leadership Team, consisting of the County Director and all management level staff, feel that employees need additional training on the state Progressive Disciplinary Procedures and the Employee Performance Management System. It is felt that employees would perform better and would achieve greater job satisfaction if they understood these two state procedures and their own rights and responsibilities regarding them.

The mission of the Department of Social Services is to ensure the health and safety of children and vulnerable adults and to help people in need of financial assistance reach their highest level of self-sufficiency. The agency's goal is to help people live better lives. Knowledge of DSS's mission and goal is vital to employees helping to achieve these goals.

To help others learn how to live better lives, employees must first possess the tools to help. In order to help our customers, staff must possess knowledge

of the agency's resources and the best ways to access those resources. They also must understand their own roles in the agency and their rights and responsibilities as DSS employees and as state employees.

Currently, new employees are given only a very brief orientation session at the time they come to complete the paperwork to finalize hiring. This orientation consists mostly of printed information being given to them with instructions to "read this when you get a chance." Front-line supervisors are able to do very little formal orientation as their jobs primarily consist of training staff in program areas such as Child Protective Services or Food Stamp Eligibility. Even management level staff are not as familiar with personnel issues such as the Progressive Disciplinary Procedures as they should be because much of their information is obtained only when they are forced to handle an employee problem. During Leadership Team meetings supervisors have expressed concerns about their lack of knowledge regarding the correct procedures for disciplining and evaluating employees.

The agency needs a means of ensuring that all staff are oriented to the agency. This includes understanding the agency's goal and mission, as well as policies and procedures that are in place to help employees achieve these goals. Employees should know what their roles in the agency are as well as their rights and responsibilities as employees of the Dillon County Department of Social Services. Our goal is to develop and implement a

comprehensive and consistent method of ensuring that all Dillon County DSS employees are oriented to the agency. Our goal is to begin implementation of this program by December 1999.

All members of the Dillon County DSS Leadership Team were polled and were asked what information they felt needed to be included in an employee orientation program. Supervisors were also asked to meet with their staff and ask them what topics they would like more information on. An analysis of the data collected showed that staff and supervisors stated that training was needed on the following items: leave and attendance policies; the use of vehicles and travel reimbursement; DSS employees' responsibilities concerning emergency welfare services; procedures regarding office equipment, supplies, and parking; the agency dress code; and employee benefits. The county director stated that she felt that all staff should be trained on the South Carolina Progressive Disciplinary Procedures and on the Employee Performance Management System.

Implementation Plan and Evaluation Method

Our first step in our implementation plan was to develop a training format and agenda which would encompass all of the topics that our data showed staff needed additional training or clarification. It was decided that the training would be developed and administered by the staff most knowledgeable on these topics; namely, the Economic Services Program Coordinator, the Business Associate, and the Personnel Director. After the development of the training agenda, the agenda was brought before the Leadership Team for input and discussion. This was done to ensure that the designed training would address the topics that staff most felt that they needed clarification on. It was also hoped that this would eliminate or at least minimize the obstacles of employee disinterest in or resistance to the orientation program. Any additions, deletions, or refinement to the agenda were done at the Leadership Team meeting.

Each supervisor was then asked to sign up his/her staff members. Each supervisor was asked to attend at least one training session, preferably with his/her own staff. Although the training was developed for presentation to all staff members, we decided to limit each session to no more than fifteen participants to allow more time and freedom for questions and discussion

from the employees. We felt that employees would be less resistant to devoting a day of their time to this training if adequate time was allowed for their questions and concerns.

The training sessions will begin in January 2000 and will consist of a full day (9:00 AM to 4:30 PM) on-site session. At least two sessions will be scheduled per month with no more than fifteen employees per session. The sessions will be scheduled throughout the months of January, February, and March 2000. Even though the agency employs less than sixty employees, we felt that we should over schedule training sessions to allow employees more freedom in choosing a day to attend. This increased flexibility in scheduling hopefully would enhance learning and participation in the program. After three months of at least two sessions per month all staff should be trained.

In April 2000 the Leadership Team will again be asked for input regarding what type of ongoing employee orientation training we would like to conduct. It is important to integrate our employee orientation program into the agency's standard operating procedures. One possible option could be to develop a schedule for new hires in which our initial employee orientation training would be presented to them within one month of their hiring day. Older employees who missed attending a session in January, February, or March due to illness or scheduling problems could also be scheduled for one of these new hire sessions as the content will remain the same. The training

team could also be responsible for developing ongoing refresher training or further clarification training on certain topics as the needs arises.

Determination of what type of training is needed could be determined through formal means such as our Employee Suggestion Program and our Leadership Team and individual unit meetings, as well as through more informal methods.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the training program, we will use a combination of several different methods. One method will be to conclude each training session with a wrap-up time in which employees will be asked what they learned and what other topics they would like included in the orientation training. Also, the progress of the orientation training will be discussed at each monthly Leadership Team meeting to allow supervisors to offer their observations of the effectiveness of the training and also their suggestions for improvement. In addition, to evaluate the training more formally, we will design a survey to be completed by staff. The survey questions will include basic questions on the topics covered by the orientation training. By analyzing the results of the survey, we will be able to obtain information as to the effectiveness of the orientation training -- did we meet our goal of orienting all employees to the agency?

Appendix 1 is the proposed training agenda and objectives with handouts which were developed and/or included to facilitate employees' learning and participation.

Dillon County DSS Employee Orientation Program

*January 18, 2000
9:00 AM to 4:30 PM
DSS Boardroom*

Agenda

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Introductions | Susan R. Carter |
| Overview of Orientation Program | Susan R. Carter |
| Programs Administered By DSS | Susan R. Carter |
| Leave and Attendance Policies | Susan R. Carter |

Break

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Vehicles and Travel Reimbursement | Brenda Hopkins |
| Emergency Welfare Services | Brenda Hopkins |
| Office Equipment, Supplies, Space, and Parking | Brenda Hopkins |
| Public Relations, Confidentiality, Dress Code, & Safety | Susan R. Carter |
| Agency Kitty, Interagency Council, Employee Morale Program, and Employee Suggestion Program | Susan R. Carter |

Lunch

| | |
|--|---------------|
| S.C. State Employees Insurance Benefits | Susan M. Cook |
| S.C. State Employees Deferred Compensation & Savings Bond Program | Susan M. Cook |

Break

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Explanation of Key Personnel Terms | Susan R. Carter |
| Employee Performance Management System | Susan R. Carter |
| Progressive Disciplinary Procedures | Susan R. Carter |
| S. C. State Retirement System | Susan M. Cook |
| Recap/Questions/Evaluation of Training/Suggestions | Susan R. Carter |

Dillon County DSS Employee Orientation Program

Goal: to orient employees to the Dillon County Department of Social Services.

Objectives

Objective #1: The employee will be able to discuss the different programs administered by DSS.

Objective #2: The employee will be able to discuss agency leave and attendance policies and procedures.

Objective #3: The employee will be able to discuss agency policies regarding the use of personal and agency vehicles and also policies concerning travel reimbursement.

Objective #4: The employee will be able to discuss his/her responsibilities regarding emergency shelter management, disaster relief programs, and other Emergency Welfare Service operations.

Objective #5: The employee will be able to discuss agency office procedures concerning the use of office equipment and supplies, office space, and parking.

Objective #6: The employee will be able to discuss agency policies concerning public relations, confidentiality of information, the agency dress code, and job safety.

Objective #7: The employee will be able to discuss the agency kitty guidelines, the Interagency Council, the Employee Morale Program, and the Employee Suggestion Program.

Objective #8: The employee will be able to discuss and explain the insurance benefits offered to employees of the South Carolina Department of Social Services.

Objective #9: The employee will be able to discuss and explain the benefits offered by the South Carolina State Employees Deferred Compensation Program and the U.S. saving bonds program.

Objective #10: The employee will be able to define and explain certain key terms used in the South Carolina Department of Social Services Personnel Administration and Procedure Manual.

Objective #11: The employee will be able to discuss and explain the Employee Performance Management System (EPMS), including the procedures for substandard job performance.

Objective #12: The employee will be able to discuss and explain the South Carolina Progressive Disciplinary Procedures as used by the South Carolina Department of Social Services.

Objective #13: The employee will be able to discuss and explain the benefits offered through the South Carolina State Retirement System.

1. Mary wakes up Monday morning with a bad sinus headache. She calls her supervisor and tells him that she is sick but that she plans to come in at 11:00 AM. At 11:00 Mary is walking out of the door to go to work when her son's school calls. Little John is sick, so she drives to the school and picks him up. She discovers that John has a temperature of 102 degrees so she calls the doctor. She also calls her supervisor back and tells him about her situation and that she will not be in at all today.

When Mary returns to work on Tuesday, how should she complete her leave slip(s)?

2. Hillary receives a call on Monday at 3:00 PM from her husband Bill. Bill's first cousin has died and they must fly to Arkansas tomorrow morning to attend the funeral on Wednesday. They will return home on Thursday and Hillary will be able to return to work at 8:30 AM on Friday.

How should Hillary complete her leave slip? When should she complete it?

3. Tom has been scheduled by his supervisor to attend a conference at Myrtle Beach, beginning Monday at 9:00 AM and ending on Thursday at 4:00 PM. He decides that he will request Friday off so that he can stay at the beach over the weekend.

How many days will Tom request leave for? When should he request leave?

4. Susan oversleeps and as a result arrives at work at 8:15 AM. (She is on flex time and her work hours are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.) She has food stamp appointments scheduled all morning long and therefore does not receive a morning break. She leaves for lunch at 1:00 PM and does not return back to the office until 2:30 because the restaurant was very busy.

Should Susan complete a leave slip? If so, how?

Definitions

1. **Permanent Full-time Equivalency (FTE):** a permanent position , with state benefits, authorized by the Appropriations Act.
2. **Temporary Grant:** a non-permanent position established with monies other than state funds which may or may not carry state benefits depending on the funding and grant provisions. A temporary grant position's duration is limited to the funding. Employees in temporary grant positions do not gain permanent status nor do they have grievance, substandard job performance, or progressive disciplinary rights.
3. **Temporary Hourly:** a non-permanent position that cannot exceed a period of one (1) year and does not carry state benefits. Employees in temporary hourly positions are paid for only the actual hours worked, do not gain permanent status nor do they have grievance, substandard job performance, or progressive disciplinary rights.
4. **Probationary Period:** an initial working test period of employment with the state of twelve months duration. An employee who receives an unsatisfactory performance appraisal during the probationary period must be terminated before becoming a covered employee. Also, probationary employees may be released from employment at any time, for any reason or for no reason at all, with or without cause.
5. **Covered Employee:** a full-time or part-time employee occupying a part or all of an established full-time equivalent (FTE) position who has completed the probationary period and has a "meets" or higher overall rating on the employee's performance evaluation and who has grievance rights. This definition does not include temporary hourly, temporary grant, or time-limited employee who do not have grievance rights.
6. **Trial Period/Status:** a working test period of six (6) months required of a covered employee following a transfer or reassignment to any class in which the employee has not held permanent status or a promotion, demotion, or reclassification. The trial period may be extended up to 90 calendar days upon written notice to the employee prior to the end of the trial period.
7. **Personnel Record:** an official file on each agency employee which is maintained in State DSS. An employee's personnel file will contain the employment application, all performance appraisals, disciplinary actions, administrative personnel documents, and other personnel documents. The personnel file is the property of the agency. An employee/former employee is entitled to review and obtain a copy of his personnel file from the agency, upon written request. Employee personnel files will be maintained as confidential agency records. Within the agency, only the following persons will have access to employee personnel files: the employee; supervisor(s); Human Resource Management Division staff; and other agency employees authorized on a need-to-know basis by the Human Resource Director.

8. Appointing Authority: the agency head or other person or group of persons empowered to effect appointments, promotions, demotions, transfers, reassignments, suspensions, and terminations.

9. Grievance: a complaint filed by a covered employee or the employee's representative regarding an adverse employment action. Terminations, suspensions, and demotions are grievable employment actions. Oral and written warnings are not grievable. Failure to be selected for a promotion is not considered an adverse employment action which can be considered for a grievance. Only covered employees have grievance rights. Employees must initiate a grievance within 14 calendar days of the effective day of the grievable action by submitting a DSS 1449, Employee's Request for Grievance, to the State Personnel Division. No employee shall be disciplined for exercising his/her grievance rights or for testifying in a grievance procedure.

Substandard Job Performance Procedures

I. Counseling --- meeting between employee and supervisor to:

- A. Discuss employee's job performance**
- B. Discuss deficiencies**
- C. Develop a plan for improvement**

II. Oral Warning of Substandard Job Performance

- A. Will include same items as written warning of substandard job performance**
- B. Is done in memo form to the employee**
- C. Time frame for correction of deficiencies can be from within 14 days to 120 days.**
- D. Is not required ---can go from counseling to written warning**

III. Written Warning of Substandard Job Performance

Requirements:

- A. Must be in writing (on DSS 432A, Employee Warning Notice), addressed to the employee, and labeled as a warning of substandard job performance**
- B. Must list the job duties and/or objectives that are "below" and explain the deficiencies**
- C. Must state a time frame for improvement (at least 30 days and no more than 120 days) and must include a plan for regularly scheduled meetings with the supervisor to discuss the employee's progress**
- D. Must state the consequences if job performance is not brought up to a "meets" within the time frame (dismissal, demotion, reassignment)**
- E. Must be signed by the employee (witnessed, if employee refuses to sign), copied with original given to employee, and copy placed in employee's personnel file**

IV. Outcomes --- at the end of the stated time frame given for improvement the employee is evaluated

- A. If the overall evaluation is a "meets" employee may continue to be employed in current position**
- B. If the overall evaluation is a "below" employee will be dismissed, reassigned, or demoted according to the appointing authority's decision after consultation with the state Human Resources Director**
- C. If an employee has been issued two warning notices within a 365 day period and performance drops to a substandard level for a third time within a 365 day period, the employee shall be removed from the position by issuing the "below performance requirements" appraisal. A warning notice is not required on the third occurrence.**

Note: The above procedures apply only to covered employees. The Substandard Performance Process is not required to demote or downwardly reclass a trial employee to a class having an equal or higher pay band than the class from which promoted, if the demotion or reclassification occurs within the trial period. The trial employee may not be terminated or demoted to a lower graded class than that from which promoted for performance reasons without following the Substandard Performance Process.

Progressive Discipline

I. What is Progressive Discipline?

- A. System of escalated penalties**
- B. Known to employees in advance**
- C. Penalties imposed with increasing severity for repeated violations**
- D. Only applies to covered employees**
- E. Applies to conduct / behavior offenses only**
- F. Dillon County DSS consults with State Office Personnel Division prior to all disciplinary actions**
- G. Dillon County DSS consults with State Office Legal Division prior to all suspensions and terminations**

II. Progressive Discipline Procedures

- A. Communication of expected behavior**
- B. Coaching and Counseling**
- C. Oral Warning --- Usually given for a lesser offense the first or second time this offense occurs**

The supervisor:

- 1. Indicates the offense violated by the employee**
- 2. Makes recommendations for corrective action**
- 3. Sets a time frame for corrective action**
- 4. Allows the employee to explain or comment**
- 5. Advises that further disciplinary action will be taken if the problem is not corrected**
- 6. Records the discussion in memo form, original to employee, copy to employee's county personnel file**

D. Written Warning

1. Same items required as for oral warning
2. Is completed on DSS 432-A, Employee Warning Notice
3. Original DSS 432-A is given to employee
4. Copy of DSS 432-A is sent to employee's official personnel file in State Office

E. Suspension

1. Usually given because of repetition of a lesser offense or a first occurrence of a more severe offense
2. A suspension is without pay
3. No sick or annual leave may be taken during a suspension
4. Cannot exceed 30 calendar days unless court action is pending

F. Termination

1. Is appropriate when an employee has committed a severe or major offense or has repeatedly committed a lesser offense